

00-5845

DD/S-56-180

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7-8194

17 JAN 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT: Signal Center Handling of a Western Union Telegram
Originated in the Office of the DCI.

1. At 5:57 P. M., 13 January 1956, a set of papers containing eight telegrams for transmission to addressees via Western Union were deposited at the Signal Center by the Cable Secretariat. Each of these telegrams was drafted on a plain sheet of white paper addressed to the individuals. The Cable Secretariat Duty Officer notified the Signal Center that these telegrams were in the "RUSH" category. Because of the "RUSH" nature of the telegrams involved they were hand-carried to the Machine Branch, by-passing the normal procedures. A senior operator already occupied on another circuit was called from that circuit to handle these telegrams on a "RUSH" basis. Upon scanning the eight messages, the operator asked his Branch Chief whether they could be booked, which practice results in a considerable saving of time. The message text need be transmitted only once for all the addressees rather than repeated for each addressee. He was informed by the Branch Chief that they could be booked, but for him to first proof-read them to see that they were the same. It is obvious that this is where the error occurred. Due to the similarity of the texts, the operator, in scanning them rapidly, did not recognize that some of the messages were slightly different from others.

2. The operator involved in this incident is a long-time employee of the Agency having served in the Signal Center and overseas since August 1949. The Branch Chief on duty at the time that the telegram in question was transmitted is also a long-time member of the Agency having served with it since September 1, 1948, with several overseas tours as well as duty in Washington. Both of these individuals have a long record of conscientiousness and reliability.

3. It is probable that a contributory factor is that the message in question was received for processing during the most critical traffic situation that the Washington Signal Center has ever experienced. 303,000 groups were processed by the Signal Center on January 13, 1956, which is the largest traffic volume that has ever been handled in the Center in one day.

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4. The Office of Communications accepts responsibility for this error and regrets its occurrence. The operator has been personally admonished by me regarding care in processing messages of this kind and all Branch Chiefs, supervisory personnel and operators have had this incident called to their attention and have been cautioned to exercise vigilance in the handling of plain texts of this nature.

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[Redacted]
Deputy Director of Communications

1st Ind.

To: Director of Central Intelligence

18 January 1956

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1. I recognize the seriousness of the failure on the part of the Signal Center in the above instance. I have discussed the matter at some length with [Redacted] and am confident that action has been taken to prevent a recurrence.

2. In view of the long service and excellent records of the operator and branch chief involved, I recommend that no further action be taken in this case.

FOIAB3B

Concur
CFC
DDCI

[Redacted]
L. K. WHITE
Deputy Director
(Support)

Approved
[Signature]
18 JAN 1956